

## Message Text

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ACTION LAB-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07  
NSAE-00 SIL-01 L-03 USIA-06 IO-13 AF-10 ARA-06  
EA-07 EUR-12 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 /109 W  
-----252333Z 040497 /61

R 251504Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3237  
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3297

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PLAB, ILO  
SUBJECT: ILO: 63RD INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE: CRITICAL  
ISSUES

REF: STATE 102699

### 1. SUMMARY:

DEMARCHE TO FONMIN ON CRITICAL ISSUES AT ILC ELICITED  
BLAST THAT U.S. TAKING SIDES WITH ISRAEL AGAINST ARABS.  
WE WILL NOT GET SYRIAN SUPPORT ON THE IRSEALI  
RESOLUTION BUT THEY HAVE PROMISED STUDY QUESTIONS CONCERN-  
INF ARTICLE 17 AND EQUAL TREATMENT IN APPLICATION OF CON-  
VENTIONS. END SUMMARY

2. I MADE DEMARCHE TO FONMIN KHADDAM MAY 21 AND LEFT  
AIDE MEMOIRE SEEKING SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR OUR POSITION ON  
THE THREE CRITICAL CONFERENCE ISSUES BEFORE THE NEXT  
SESSION OF THE ILC.

3. KHADDAM IN REPLY FOCUSED PRINCIPALLY (ADD HEATEDLY) ON THE  
"ISREALI RESOLUTION" STATING USG MUST REALIZE THAT, WHEREVER POSSIBLE  
TO DO SO, IT IS A FIRM SYRIAN POLICY TO ISOLATE AND CONDEMN  
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ISRAEL IN EVERY INTERNATIONAL SETTING. OUR PRESENTATION OF  
THE POINT CONCERNING ISRAEL PUT THE U.S. AND ISRAEL INTO  
ONE CAMP. THIS, HE SNAPPED, DOES NOT HELP THOSE WHO HOPE  
FOR A DEVELOPMENT OF BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ARAB  
COUNTRIES AND THE U.S. SYRIA IS WILLING TO DISCUSS ANY  
QUESTION WHICH INVOLVES U.S. POSITIONS, BUT WHEN THE U.S.  
APPEARS TO BE TAKING UP THE CUDGEL FOR ISRAEL, "AN ISRAEL

WHICH IS HOSTILE TO THE ARABS AND DESTRUCTIVE OF ARAB INTERESTS, THIS IS UNHELPFUL TO ARAB/AMERICAN RELATIONS." THE USG IN EFFECT IS ASKING SYRIA AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES TO MAKE CONCESSIONS AT A TIME WHEN THE ARABS SEE LITTLE INITIATIVE FROM THE U.S. TO PRESSURE ISRAEL. THE LEAST SYRIA CAN DO IS TO DENOUNCE ISRAEL IN EVERY INTERNATIONAL FORUM.

4. I REPLIED THAT EVEN THE QUESTION DIRECTLY AFFECTING ISRAEL HAS BROADER THAN MID-EAST IMPLICATIONS. IN ANY EVENT IT IS ONLY ONE ISSUE TROUBLING USG RELATIONS WITH THE ILO, BUT ADDS TO A SITUATION WHICH, AGAINST OUR WILL, COULD LEAD US TO DECIDE TO QUIT THE ILO. KHADDAM REPLIED THAT ANY SUCH DECISION CONCERNS U.S. SOVEREIGNTY BUT FRANKLY SPEAKING, FOR THE U.S. TO LEAVE AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE SAKE OF ISRAEL WOULD GIVE THE WORST POSSIBLE IMPRESSION TO THE ARABS. IN SUCH EVENT, HE ASSERTED, ARABS WOULD HAVE NO CONFIDENCE THAT AMERICA WILL OBLIGE ISRAEL TO COMPLY WITH UN RESOLUTIONS ABOUT OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND PALESTINAIN RIGHTS. NOR WOULD IT SERVE BROADER U.S. INTERESTS IN THE THIRD WORLD.

5. EVEN ON TECHNICAL GROUNDS, KHADDAM MAINTAINED, ISRAEL DESERVES CONDEMNATION FOR THE WAY IT TREATS ARAB WORKERS. I REPLIED THIS CHARGE HAD NEVER BEEN ADEQUATELY INVESTIGATED AND OUR PROTEST WAS BASED ON THIS VERY LACK OF OBSERVANCE OF PROPER PROCEDURE. KHADDAM ASKED IF A QUESTION OTHER THAN ISRAELI INTERESTS WERE AT STAKE, WOULD AMERICA TAKE THE SAME VIEW? I REPLIED WE WOULD AND NOTED CONFIDENTIAL

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THERE WERE MANY GROUPS IN THE U.S. DISILLUSIONED WITH ILO PRACTICES. WE DID NOT REGARD EVEN THIS ISSUE AS A PURELY MIDE-EAST ONE, BUT RATHER AS FUNDAMENTAL TO DUE PROCESS IN ILO.

6. KHADDAM REITERATED, "WE CAN DISCUSS EVERYTHING EXCEPT SYRIA'S STAND AGAINST ISRAEL IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS, THIS IS FIRM." HE UNDERTOOK GIVE STUDY THE OTHER POINTS OF OUR AIDE MEMOIRE AND TO REVIEW ISSUES WITH THE MINISTER OF LABOR WHO WOULD ATTEND ILO CONFERENCE.

7. COMMENT:

KHADDAM'S NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE ISRAELI ISSUE WAS PRECIDICTABLE. HOWEVER WE MAY PHRASE IT. SYRIANS INSTINCTIVELY SUSPECT OUR DEMARCHES ON ANY ISSUE WHERE THEY HAVE STAKED OUT A GROUND CRITICAL OF ISRAEL AS OUR BEING UNWARRANTEDLY PROTECTIVE OF ISRAEL. THEY REJECT THE INTERPRETATION

WE COULD HAVE BROADER GOALS IN MIND. I, NONETHELESS,  
DECIDED THIS DEMARCHE MIGHT HELP US PICK UP SUPPORT ON  
THE OTHER TWO VOTES AND MADE IT ALSO WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT  
IF THE DEMARCHE WERE NOT AT THE FONMIN'S LEVEL, WE WOULD  
HAVE LITTLE HOPE OF ATTRACTING SERIOUS ATTENTION TO OUR  
OTHER POSITIONS. FURTHERMORE, I BELIEVE IT DOES NO HARM,  
EVEN WHEN THE OUTCOME IS PREDICTABLE, TO USE SUCH OCCASIONS  
TO DO SOME LOBBYING FOR THE GOAL OF GAINING MORE SOPHISTICATED  
UNDERSTANDING IN SYRIA OF THE U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS, AS  
WELL AS OF HOW THE SYRIAN OBSESSION ON ARAB-ISRAEL MATTERS  
CAN DAMAGE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION GENERALLY.

8. KHADDAM'S REACTION HOWEVER IS A REMINDER THAT SHOULD  
THE USG FIND ITSELF OBLIGED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE ILO,  
OUR ACTION WILL BE INTERPRETED HERE, AND PERHAPS IN MANY  
ARAB COUNTRIES, THROUGH THEIR OPTIC ON THE ARAB-ISRAEL  
CONFRONTATION. AMONG OTHER CONCERNS WEIGHING ON OUR  
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DECISION, THEREFORE, SHOULD BE HOW WITHDRAWAL COULD AFFECT  
ONGOING PREPARATION FOR THE GENEVA MEPC.  
MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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